



## FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

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*For Immediate Release*

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# Parks Celebrate Renowned Groundhog's Legend

Gardeners may not roll out the red carpet for vegetable-gobbling groundhogs, but as mid-winter approaches, a famous groundhog from Pennsylvania will be treated like royalty for his ability to "predict" the weather. Punxsutawney Phil will emerge from his underground lair on February 2, 2008, Groundhog Day, and either provides hope of an early spring, or the promise of six more weeks of winter. Ironically, a sunny day that causes him to see his shadow portends more cold weather.

Pennsylvania's official celebration of Groundhog Day began on February 2nd, 1886 with a proclamation in *The Punxsutawney Spirit* by the newspaper's editor, Clymer Freas: "Today is Groundhog Day and up to the time of going to press the beast has not seen its shadow."

The Fairfax County Park Authority is celebrating the quirky holiday with children's programs at two nature centers. Kids are invited to meet a larger-than-life groundhog at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park's Walney Visitor Center from 1 to 2 p.m. Interesting facts about groundhogs will be presented as well as the story behind the holiday. Groundhog games will provide fun for everyone. Reservations are required for this free program. To reserve, call the nature center at 703-631-0013. Walney Visitor Center is located at 5040 Walney Road in Chantilly.

Green Spring Gardens' Garden Sprouts program will teach the legend of the groundhog's shadow to pre-school children ages three to five. They'll learn how to determine how much winter weather remains. The cost is \$5 per child. Sessions are available on Thursday, February 7 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., or 11 to noon and from 10 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, February 9. To register, call 703-642-5173. Green Spring Gardens is located at 4603 Green Spring Road in Alexandria.

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